

ORIG INTERTEL

Peloquin, Robert
Dolan
(orig under Zito)

Peloquin of Intertel: Intelligence, Security, Targets of Opportunity

By Tom Zito

CHRISTMAS MORNING, 1972: A damp, chilly fog covered Brighton, the Atlantic City of the British Isles. Not the best of Christmas days. Still, there was dinner with the family to warm the spirits and Sir Randolph Bacon, retired commissioner of Scotland Yard, had just sat down at the table. "I had barely gotten my fork in the turkey," he recalls, "when the phone bell rang. Yes, I would say it was one of the more unusual calls I have had in my life."

"We have a client arriving at Gatwick airport in about two hours," said the caller, Robert Dolan Peloquin, the resident of Intertel, one of the world's leading private intelligence and security firms. "He's in the air now. His passport has expired and I'd like you to help him through immigration."

"How will I know him?" asked Bacon, a member of Intertel's board of directors and a former president of Interpol, the international organization of law enforcers.

"He'll be in a private jet. One of our men on the plane will contact you at Gatwick."

"Very well. I can be there in about an hour. By the way, who is the client?"

"Howard Hughes."

Two hours later, Bacon had made the necessary arrangements with the British Home Office. Hughes and his entourage walked through immigration and into a waiting fleet of six Rolls Royce limousines that sped the group to London's Inn at the Park.

All this was No Big Deal for Intertel or Bob Peloquin. Just another day's work. Like meeting with the King of Spain in Madrid last month. Drafting plans for an airport security system in Detroit. Locating and destroying a million-dollar lost shipment of American drugs that had turned into deadly poison in a tiny African nation. Sweeping the phones of a large corporation for phone taps. Designing a prison security system in Rhode Island. Policing the gambling casinos at Paradise Island in the Bahamas. Digging up evidence and witnesses for a London newspaper slapped with a libel suit. Checking out real estate agents buying properties for a giant hamburger chain. Or—the one Peloquin considers his biggest personal coup—tracking down in Switzerland the mysterious person who posed as H.R. Hughes and en-

dorsed \$650,000 in checks from McGraw-Hill: checks intended as payment to the reclusive millionaire for collaborating with Clifford Irving on an autobiography; but in fact cashed by Irving's wife, Edith, while posing as "Helga Hughes."

Peloquin is a crafty man, an ex-Justice Department investigator who realized that there were millions to be made parlaying investigative skills learned within the federal bureaucracy into a lucrative private enterprise. At 48, he heads one of the world's largest private intelligence networks, orchestrating a staff of 50 professionals, most of them ex-FBI, IRS and CIA agents.

"It's not really that much of a change to come here from the FBI or the IRS," says Peloquin. "Intertel is basi-

cally a collection of people who have succeeded reasonably well in government and have a desire for a second career. I get 'em cheap. I capitalize on government training."

Peloquin's best friend and neighbor, Washington lawyer Eddie O'Connell, calls Intertel "a civilian FBI." Peloquin's wife, Margaret, whom he met here in 1948 while she was studying at the now-defunct Dunbarton College and he was a student at Georgetown, says her husband never talks about his work.

"He's very close-mouthed," she says. "Well, maybe that's good. If they ever get me on the witness stand, I can honestly say I don't know anything."

Intertel's vice-president, Tom McKeon, recalls a phrase Peloquin used to teach his students when he was a Naval Intelligence officer, and says it still characterizes the boss' attitude toward work: "Loose lips sink ships."

But when Peloquin wants to talk, he can. He knows how to give and take to get what he wants. "A lot of investigative reporters have lived off Bob Peloquin," says Seymour Hersh, the New York Times investigative reporter who broke the My Lai massacre and Glomar Explorer stories.

Peloquin looks and acts the part of the wheeler-dealer sleuth; 6 feet-1 inch, with deep-set searing brown eyes that constantly scan the space around him. Conservative suits and ties. A large, black attache case. Cups and cups of coffee. He wakes up restless at 4 in the morning and reads: American Heritage, "Roots," National Geographic, "The Raising of the Titanic," "The Eagle Has Landed," "None of that Ellery Queen crap," he says. He takes a sauna in the family hot tub in Bethesda. At 6:30 he's on the tennis court. He complains about the morning paper boy, that the paper isn't on the doorstep until he's back from tennis.